

ON THE OCCASION OF THE GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM

This position paper has been developed and signed by a coalition of 145 women's rights civil society organizations (WCSOs) in the context of the forthcoming Generation Equality Forum (GEF). The GEF includes Action Coalitions that seek "tangible results" on "financing" and "gender data and accountability", including coalitions specifically on "Economic justice and rights" and "Feminist movements and leadership". According to the [GEF website](#), "Each Action Coalition will propose a targeted set of concrete, ambitious and immediate actions within the period of 2020-2025 to deliver tangible impact on gender equality and girls' and women's human rights. They will secure financing for this agenda, to address systemic resource gaps that have so far hampered impact." This paper proposes commitments that the undersigned would like to see UN agencies, the European Union (EU) and state funders make, in close consultation with WCSOs and feminist movements.

1. SET CLEAR FINANCING TARGETS TO DELIVER ON COMMITMENTS

Challenge: Significant gender inequalities persist globally, and likely have worsened amid the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). As part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, and various gender action plans, the UN, EU and several states have committed to involving and supporting WCSOs as key instigators of change. Indeed, WCSOs have been at the forefront of efforts to transform gender norms and structures, provide crucial services, and improve institutional responses to inequalities. Amid government changes, instability, and crises, they have remained consistent advocates. They have been key in establishing peace amid conflict. Yet, evidence clearly shows that funding is not being delivered in accordance with the aforementioned policy commitments. Only approximately 4% of official development assistance (ODA) explicitly funds gender equality; and WCSOs have received directly only 0.2% of bilateral aid, rather consistently for a decade.¹

Proposed Action: All funders should commit to:

- *Require* gender responsive budgeting, based on gender analysis, for all programming. The EU and states can use conditionalities related to their funding, requiring multilaterals, INGOs, companies and governments to use gender responsive budgeting and to earmark a percentage of their funding for women's rights and WCSOs, respectively.
- *Require* accurate tracking of actual expenditures on gender equality and WCSOs, respectively, including in actions that involve gender mainstreaming.

2. INSTIGATE EFFORTS TO REVISE THE OECD GENDER MARKER AND REQUIRE ITS IMPROVED USAGE

Challenge: All ODA should use the OECD Gender Policy Marker, which requires marking every action, based on gender analysis. At present, research² has shown substantial non-marking

¹ OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GenderNet), "[Aid Focused on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)", 2020; and Jen Ross, "[Chronically underfunded, women peace builders need support more than ever](#)", UN Women website, 29 Oct. 2020.

² See, for example: [Where's the Money for Women's Rights?](#), 2020.

or mismarking of funds. Only a portion of actions receiving a gender marker 1 actually fund gender equality, which contributes to inaccurate over-reporting of actual expenditures on gender equality. Currently, the OECD Gender Policy Marker does not measure financial contributions at output or activity levels. Adequate gender responsive budgeting, as per the [UN SDG 5c1 indicator](#), and adequate marking as per the [OECD Gender Equality Policy Marker guidance](#) would require appropriate gender analysis to accurately mark projects' contributions to gender equality. No clear mechanisms or systems exist for tracking funding for WCSOs and feminist movements.

Proposed Action: All funders: in accordance with best practices in gender responsive budgeting and the guidance for the OECD Gender Equality Policy Marker, commit to:

- *Require* that gender analysis be included in all project documents towards appropriately informing action design.
- *Require* that expenditures be clearly allocated to realize needs identified through analysis.
- *Require* reporting of actual expenditures at all levels of the intervention logic; do not accept objectives to be counted as contributions to gender equality when only a portion of the objective's funds support furthering gender equality.
- *Install* systems for tracking actual expenditures on gender equality and WCSOs as key actors and instigators of transformative changes, respectively.
- For the OECD: *Add* two additional levels to the OECD Gender Equality Policy Marker to measure expenditures at output and activities levels, as per gender responsive budgeting.

3. REVIEW CONTRACTING MODALITIES AND SEEK TO CONTRACT WCSOS

Challenge: The prevalent approach of contracting individual experts or companies, rather than WCSOs, for efforts related to furthering gender equality and women's rights draws financial and human resources away from WCSOs and feminist movements. Contracting individuals instead of WCSOs undermines recognition of organisations' expertise and role in contributing to changes. The currently complicated and time-consuming UN vetting process excludes many WCSOs, and UN agency field offices seem to avoid these processes as too resource-draining, preferring service contracts. Short-term and project-based contracts make it difficult to organize around long-term strategic aims.

Proposed Action: Funders, commit to:

- *Review* current funding modalities, particularly those used globally by UN agencies, adjusting these to enable easier contracting of WCSOs as long-term partners in change.
- *Actively encourage* the contracting of WCSOs that have expertise, rather than individual experts, towards movement-building (in contexts where WCSOs can safely receive foreign financing). Following appropriate due diligence screening, establish long-term funding partnerships with WCSOs as equal partners.
- *Establish more, diverse funding modalities* that include multiyear and core funding, which can contribute to more strategic long-term actions, flexibility amid political instability and conflict, enhanced capacities, and sustainability of WCSOs and movements.

4. UN: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A GLOBAL POLICY OF NON-COMPETE

Challenge: UN agencies often, intentionally or unintentionally, compete with WCSOs for funds or take over the work that WCSOs have been doing. The UN has substantially more resources than WCSOs, which makes it easier for UN agencies to commit resources for fundraising. Moreover, states' and EU commitments to the UN mean that UN agencies are not subject to the same processes of procurement; they can more easily negotiate direct financing. This can contribute to unfair competition for resources.

Proposed Action: The UN should commit to establishing a policy of “non-compete” for funds with WCSOs at the global level and ensure country and regional offices implement it.

5. UN AGENCIES: REQUIRE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS OF NEED

Challenge: In some contexts, UN agencies may play a key role in convincing governments to change their approach, whereas in other contexts there are strong women’s networks, and UN agencies should have a different role, like supporting international human rights monitoring exercises. Country offices may not always be needed. In some instances, they overlap with and/or draw support away from WCSOs and indigenous feminist movements.

Proposed Action: UN and its funders: commit to conducting periodic (e.g., 5-year) independent assessments to determine the added value of UN agency country offices in particular contexts. If strong, indigenous women’s rights organizations and/or networks exist, support them instead of the comparatively more expensive country offices, towards effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of WCSOs and feminist movements.

6. IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF EXISTING RESOURCING

Challenge: Funders’ different strategies, templates, timeframes, and procurement procedures create substantial administrative burden for WCSOs, taking time away from their activism. Quarterly reporting, such as used by the UN system, involves substantial administrative burden for UN staff and activists alike. Poor coordination in the planning of strategies and actions coupled with funder inflexibility contributes to overlap, an inefficient use of resources, and a not very strategic approach to transformative change.

Proposed Action: Funders: Commit to more proactive coordination *among* funders and activists for joint strategizing, shared efforts, and pooled funding towards shared aims. For example, require only one report for several funders, thereby decreasing the administrative burden and resources required by funders and activists alike. Commit to reviewing accountability procedures to design other modalities for ensuring accountability, based on results achieved. UN agencies: Commit to end requirements for quarterly reporting.

7. ENGAGE WCSOS IN PROGRAM PLANNING AND POLITICAL DIALOGUES

Challenge: Sometimes UN agencies, international organizations, and/or development actors do not invite or involve WCSOs that have extensive expertise on particular issues to be part of political dialogues on these very issues (e.g., gender-based violence, gender responsive-budgeting, gender statistics). Despite their expertise, WCSOs’ work is sometimes relativized and downgraded. Often WCSOs are not even consulted during processes of planning new programs that aim to further gender equality. This contributes to poor planning, duplication of efforts, and inefficient use of resources.

Proposed Action: All development actors: Ensure WCSOs are consulted during processes of planning new programs, particularly when focused on areas where they possess expertise. Ensure local WCSOs with expertise are consulted and engaged in political dialogues with government counterparts, including WCSOs’ expertise, building government-civil society relations, and providing important political support and visibility to WCSOs.

8. RECOGNIZE AND GIVE CREDIT TO WCSOS’ WORK

Challenge: In reports at country and international levels, on several occasions UN agencies have failed to publicly acknowledge the contributions of WCSOs to achievements made. In the worst cases, UN agencies have taken credit for work done by WCSOs. In other instances,

reports by UN agencies only mention “CSOs” without appropriately recognising the names of WCSOs that have worked hard to bring about social change.

Proposed Action: UN agencies: commit to recognizing and giving credit to WCSOs, by name. This can contribute substantially to the recognition of WCSOs’ expertise, which can translate into political support, further legitimization of their work in the eyes of citizens and national governments, and resources. This would contribute to implementing UN resolutions, towards the sustainability of WCSOs and movements via improved local support.

OUR COMMITMENT

We, the undersigned, commit to continuing our evidence-based advocacy on these issues and remaining present to provide our expertise in support of the proposed actions herein.

1. Agritra Vision, Albania
2. Albanian Women’s Empowerment Network, Albania
3. Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, Moldova (53 organizations, full list at <http://aopd.md/membrii-aopd/>)
56. Alternative Girls’ Center (*Alternativni Centar za Devojke*), Serbia
57. ASTRA – Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Belgrade (*Astra – akcija protiv trgovine ljudima – Beograd*), Serbia
58. Association of citizens Sirma, Kumanovo, North Macedonia
59. Association of citizens for rural development RAJ, Rosoman, North Macedonia
60. Civil Initiative for Equal Opportunities “SEMPER”, Bitola, North Macedonia
61. The Coalition ‘Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities’ - MARGINS, North Macedonia
62. Association Fenomena Kraljevo (*Udruženje Fenomena Kraljevo*), Serbia
63. Association “Me the Woman”, Albania
64. Association for Social Innovations and Sustainable Development RADAR, Skopje, North Macedonia
65. Association of Women Femina Smederevska Palanka (*Udruženje žena Femina Smederevska Palanka*), Serbia
66. Association of Women Sandglass Krusevac (*Udruženje žena Peščanik Kruševac*), Serbia
67. Association of Women Impulse Tutin (Impuls Tutin) (Serbia)
68. Autonomous Women’s Center (*Autonomni ženski Centar, Beograd*), Serbia
69. Center for Women’s Rights Etika, Gostivar, North Macedonia
70. Center for Research and Policy Making, Skopje, North Macedonia
71. Civic initiative of women, GIZ Sveti Nikole, North Macedonia
72. Committee for Human Rights Vranje (*Odbor za ljudska prava Vranje*), Serbia
73. Community Building Mitrovica, Kosovo
74. Counselling Line for Women and Girls, Albania
75. EchO Educational Humanitarian Organization, Shtip, North Macedonia
76. Foundation for Local Development and Democracy Focus, Veles, North Macedonia
77. Foundation United Women, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
78. Gender Alliance for Development Centre, Albania
79. Gender Peace and Security Association, Albania
80. Gender Centru, Moldova
81. Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Banjaluka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
82. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, North Macedonia
83. Independent Initiative for Blind People (Iniciativa e Pavarur e të Verbërve), Kosovo
84. IPKO Foundation, Kosovo
85. Journalist for Human Rights, Skopje, North Macedonia
86. Keystone Moldova
87. Kosovo Women’s Network, Kosovo
88. Medica Kosova, Kosovo
89. Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights (Association – MWAHR), Kosovo

90. NGO for Advocacy and Reintegration of Victims of Violence.
91. OJQ Drugëza, Skenderaj, Kosovo
92. Organization of Women (*Organizacija na zheni*), Bitola, North Macedonia
93. Organization of Women of Municipality of Sveti Nikole, Sveti Nikole, North Macedonia
94. The Platform for Gender Equality, Moldova (36 members, full list at: <https://egalitadedegen.md/membri>)
130. Reactor – Research in Action, North Macedonia
131. Roma Center for Women and Children, Daje, Serbia
132. Rural Coalition, Kicevo, North Macedonia
133. Safe Oasis Kragujevac (Oaza sigurnosti Kragujevac), Serbia
134. Shqiponjat e Dardanës, Kosovo
135. SOS Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Vlasotince (SOS telefon za žene i decu žrtve nasilja Vlasotince), Serbia
136. SOS Women's Centre Novi Sad (SOS Ženski centar Novi Sad), Serbia
137. Svet Andjela, Mitrovica, Kosovo
138. Udruženje žena Romkinja (UŽR) "BOLJA BUDUĆNOST", Bosnia and Herzegovina
139. Vatra Psycho-Social Center, Albania
140. Victimology Society of Serbia Belgrade (Viktimološko društvo Srbije Beograd), Serbia
141. WNGO Women Action, Montenegro
142. Women's Centre - Uzice (Ženski centar - Užice), Serbia
143. Women's Civic Initiative "KLEA" – Bitola, North Macedonia
144. Women for Peace - Leskovac (Žene za mir – Leskovac), Serbia
145. Women's Rights Centre, Montenegro